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# THE LORD CHANCELLOR PREPARES HIS OPINION

BY ARCHIBALD MACLEISH

My Lords, this is a clear unmuddied case—

A clear unmuddied case! If ever stream  
Of pure judicial reasoning bore down  
More silt and wreckage of the heart's unease  
Than this thin rill! But let the sarcasm stand;  
It serves at least to thrust me on the cause  
Full running, in a careless jogging start,  
Ahead of fox and beagles, horn uplift,  
Toot-tootling at full breath, as one who knows  
Before the hunt's up where the brush will fall.

My Lords, this is a clear unmuddied case.  
The plaintiff is a lady of the Court,  
A maid of honor to Her Majesty and known  
By beauty's rumor far as Tyne and Tweed.

By beauty's rumor—there I've found myself  
With just the breath of satire; not one tone  
Of all the tones her beauty struck in me,  
Leaving me jangling like a belfry bell  
Under a thrust of thunder.

She impleads  
The courts of equity to have relief  
Against defendant, in that he has made  
A full heroic picture of herself,  
Likest Diana, with the curved moon's arc  
Crowning her head, and in her hand a spear;  
No adjective beside to qualify  
The fact of her—

Ah, there's another touch  
To throw them off the scent. They'll nudge and say  
"My lord is mellow": they will never dream  
How that still beauty on the canvas caught,

Caught and held fast, as in the brain sometimes  
 A gesture of the soul is caught and held,—  
 How that still beauty stopped my mouth with awe,  
 And left my poor brain gaping. Like a tree,  
 A birch tree, shining in a windy place  
 Where blown and shattered leaves of sunlight fall,  
 And grasses ripple and the flooding blue  
 Seems to engulf the world; or like a wave  
 That tips with foam and flowering in the sea,  
 Drives on before the wind, a curve of sound  
 And failing flame of water, such intents  
 This phrase of mine obscures:

No adjective

Beside to qualify the fact of her.  
 The paint once dried, defendant made demand  
 For sums, excess of reason, which, refused,  
 The painter had his shameless painting set  
 Within the windows of a coffee house,  
 That all who paid might see and all who saw,  
 Knowing her face,—it was a replica  
 Most exquisite exact, her counsel saith,—  
 Might stand and stare. To this so-stated bill  
 Defendant has demurred.

So stands the cause.

My Lords, here is no ground for equity.  
 It is established from the earliest days  
 That save a man be injured in his purse,  
 Or in his lands, or in his common right,  
 He may not plead the Chancellor for aid.  
 And here what right is injured? Are there fees  
 And rents and profits in a replica?  
 Is beauty such a thing as this grave court,  
 Accustomed to the solid weight of trade,  
 Apt to divide with cold appraising eye  
 The estates of merchants, and maintain the scales  
 Against the shrewd in barter, long enured  
 To holding lands and livings in its trusts—  
 Is beauty such a value as we know?  
 Shall we weigh symmetry in sterling's worth?  
 Shall equity protect a woman's throat  
 Against the painter's interest in his paint?  
 The bill should be dismissed.

Ah, that's well done,  
That's very well. I see them nod and bow  
And echo what I've said; I see—I see—  
Nay nothing but a beauty such as time  
In all its ebb and flow against this earth  
Has never yet tossed, like a tinted shell,  
High on the echoing beaches that look out  
Toward the faint lights of the voyaging stars.

## INTERVALS

BY BEATRICE RAVENEL

I shall make offering in a new basket of marsh-grass  
Curved like a conch-shell, sharp with salt echoes,  
Two long handles like looped arms.  
Untamed things shall I bring to the god of gardens,  
Plum-blossom, sweet-olive and thyme,  
Tang of small figs, gone wild in deserted gardens,  
Most subtle of trees as the serpent is subtlest of beasts,  
Slouched on the heat-soaked walls . . .  
I shall lay them under the weary, appraising eyes,  
The cynical, musical fingers  
That rest on the goat-thighs.  
Let me give him, O Pan,  
All in the way of love—  
The new, keen edge of difference,  
The wonder of being together,  
And the wild taste of immemorial marsh-grass.  
But in the intervals,  
When the lover is gone and only the comrade remains,  
Pan, have mercy!  
Teach me to talk like a man!